

te vaya observándose una gradual transformación en el ánimo de uno de los acusadores, y que el reo, después de brevísima peripecia, logre aniquilar a quienes se suponía que gozaban de autoridad y poder máximos sobre su persona, es circunstancia que introduce en la trama un cierto elemento de originalidad y de grata sorpresa. Mas para llegar al fin, el lector ha tenido que habérselas con un texto en el que es difícil entrar con interés suficiente. Tomeo ha querido ofrecernos una parábola de la liberación, sin reparar en que, muy probablemente, ha pasado el momento de escribir parábolas en general, y parábolas secularizantes en particular. Quiere hablarnos del derrumbamiento del viejo orden y del *culte de l'humanité* como credo renovador y sustitutivo. No es que el asunto carezca de importancia; nadie se atrevería a negársela. Lo que ocurre es que todo eso ha sido tan bien dicho a lo largo de estos últimos trescientos o cuatrocientos años, que es imposible encontrar una justificación para que se diga una vez más. Sólo un muy especial acierto en la elección y desarrollo del recurso ficticio habría conseguido dar garra novelesca a cuestión tan universalmente conocida. A fin de cuentas, el autor ha querido escribir una *novela*, y como tal hay que juzgarla.

Tomeo dialoga con facilidad, y es una lástima que en esta ocasión la materia misma de los diálogos no le permita aligerar un relato que viene a resultar, en su mayor parte, moroso y repetitivo. Inconveniente aún más grave es el tono indeciso de una narración en la que astracanada y filosofía han querido hermanarse, no sé yo con qué propósito. Si de lo que se trataba era de escribir un gracioso libelo anticlerical —y los libelos anticlericales siguen teniendo literaria razón de ser—, ¿para qué empeñarse también en aventura más ambiciosa? Esa mezcla resulta poco conveniente. Y llegamos a preguntarnos si no habrá querido el autor parecerse, creo que sin lograrlo, a los que fueron grandes maestros del pensamiento profundo y de la expresión mordaz, a Schopenhauer, a Nietzsche, a Kafka, por ejemplo.

Sea ello como fuere, queda el consuelo de saber que Javier Tomeo es escritor de verdad y que ha sabido demostrarlo en obra tan reciente como *El crimen del cine Oriente* (1995), estupenda narración llevada con gracia, ternura y desgarro, continuadora de la mejor tradición del realismo documental peninsular. Es de esperar que *La máquina voladora* haya sido sólo un pasajero *lapsus calami* sin mayor importancia en el brillante historial de nuestro novelista.

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Antonio Prieto. *El ciego de Quíos*. Barcelona, Seix Barral, 1996, 219 pp.

At first glance *El ciego de Quíos*, by Antonio Prieto, appears to be a novelized version of how Homer came to write the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, but in reality it is an exploration of inspiration and the creative pro-

cess. The opening and closing sections are told in the first person by a narrator who has accompanied a notary to the dwelling of five Muses, a house that has been visited throughout the ages by Virgil, Homer, El Greco, and other famous writers and artists. The narrator, too, has visited the house many times and is aware of the influence that the five women have had on the evolution of the world's culture. The notary, on the other hand, is only interested in the dimensions and value of the house and cannot understand in the least the history that his companion relates to him. In the final section we learn that the suspicious townspeople, who, like the notary, are incapable of comprehending the function of the Muses, have categorized them as witches to be garrotted and burned. Their ashes have been strewn over the valley, and the narrator speculates that they have materialized into a little twinkling star that contains the spirit of Iphigenia, the Muse with whom the narrator has had the closest association.

The main body of the book is devoted to the story of the wanderings of a *peregrino*, who identifies himself as Homer at the end of the story. He begins on the island of Chios, where he has grown up listening to poets relate the tales of the great Classical heroes and where he has fallen in love with the lovely Euriclea, she of the fiery eyes. The gaze of Euriclea has enabled him to transform the stories of the Trojan War into hexameters, which he proposes to write down in order to preserve them for future generations. He thus can see the relation between the signs and the reality of the history he is transmitting and can give immortality to the signs.

In order to achieve his purpose, Homer decides that he must travel the islands where Achilles and the other heroes performed their heroic feats. As a young man, Homer wants to capture the epic glory of battles won and lost. During his years of travel he visits many of the islands in the Aegean and continues to compose his poem. Eventually, after storms at sea and many other adventures, he is sold as a galley slave and spends many years with his friend, Paleneo, enduring that difficult life. After being taken as hostages in Lydia, he and Paleneo end up working in the palace of a rich banker named Láríco, where they have a relatively easy life. The death of Paleneo has a profound effect on Homer, who reveals to Láríco that he has written a poem in which he speaks of his own world and the world of ancient Troy in the same words. Upon hearing Homer's poetry, Láríco gives Homer the opportunity to write down his hexameters, at the same time granting him his freedom. Thus the *Iliad* is completed and Homer remains free now much older and experienced. He is now known as «*el viejo peregrino*».

His *Iliad* finished, Homer leaves Ephesus and his manuscripts behind and returns to Chios, where he learns that his parents are dead and that Euriclea has abandoned Chios, sailing away on a ship, having rejected many suitors including the persistent Euríalo. Here, too, he consults a

fortuneteller who tells him that Athena's will is that he visit more islands, both known and unknown, and that the sea will carry him to one whose inhabitants do not know war, because they are loved by all the gods. The older poet no longer wishes to write of war and angry young heroes, but to tell the story of figures like Odysseus, who could dream their islands and concentrate on human relationships.

These new wanderings lead Homer through many adventures, many of them similar to those of Odysseus, such as refusing to be tempted by the Sirens and managing to navigate through Scylla and Charybdis. One of the most remarkable episodes tells of a stay on the island that the seer in Chios had told him about, the land whose inhabitants are loved by all the gods. Here he meets a beautiful woman named Nausícaa, whom he believes to be Euriclea, she of the fiery eyes, whom he loved long ago in Chios. In spite of the fact that they love each other and that she offers him eternal youth if he stays with her, he tells her that he has another destiny and that he must leave. Thus he goes to the small island of Ios to write the *Odyssey*. The name of the protagonist is revealed at the end when the sailor who takes him there asks him his name, because Nausícaa wanted to know it, and the wanderer replies that he has told Euriclea to call him Homer.

This novel is beautifully written and evokes the Classical style. As in epic poems, Prieto uses epithets to refer to the characters. Homer's mother is called «the prudent Creteide,» his father is known as «Alcínoo, the good father,» and his native land is referred to as «the rugged island of Chios.» Reality and fantasy are mixed, just as history and myth intermingle. Homer's adventure on the island where all the inhabitants are loved by the gods is clearly identified as a dream in which the characters are doubles of his family and friends in Chios. The whole story thereby takes on mythic and mysterious proportions. The twinkling star that contains the spirit of Iphigenia also reflects the gaze of Euriclea and of Nausícaa and serves as a constant source of inspiration for the poet.

Beyond all this, however, is the profound expression of how ancient and contemporary history can be expressed in a sign, in a word, that contains the complete story and is relevant for people of all times, thus giving timelessness to the grandeur of the past and of the present. Inspired by his Muses, Homer used this ability to endow the events that he described with a universal reality that assures immortality for his works as well as for himself.

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Vicente Gallego. *La plata de los días*. Madrid, Visor, 1996, 110 pp.

La poesía de Vicente Gallego (Valencia, 1963) muestra una evolución que, al fin, lo ha situado de lleno en los terrenos reflexivos de la tenden-